

## **Disney Community Grant Extends Magical Experiences to Hospice Patients**

**Costa Mesa, Calif. January 18, 2017** – A veteran Disney cast member whose passion is helping patients through hospice has been the catalyst for seven consecutive years of grants from the Disney VoluntEARS Community Fund to The Southern California Hospice Foundation (SCHF). Each year, the Disney gift helps the Foundation create its own brand of magic in the lives of children and adults diagnosed with terminal illnesses.

Leila Keating's day job is serving as Assistant to the Disney Resorts Senior Vice President of Experience Development. But when not on the job, Leila is still involved with experiences -- dedicated to making a difference as a volunteer at Companion Hospice, affiliated with SCHF, and with the touching experiences created for patients by the Foundation.

Keating first became aware of hospice in 2000 when her mother needed end-of-life care. Inspired by the compassion she witnessed, and later when her father was in the hospital in 2004, Keating responded to a newspaper advertisement seeking hospice volunteers.

Keating explained, "Seeing my mother in hospice care, followed by losing my father a few years later, I felt a real connection with those in the hospital. I loved hearing their stories. For me, volunteering is about connecting with people who are hungry for interaction. Many of these people just need to be acknowledged with a simple smile because they just feel invisible. For me, volunteering with hospice is incredibly rewarding – I truly get back more than I give!"

Michelle Wulfestieg, executive director of SCHF, points out that Keating's passion to help is an example of how the Foundation is able to provide such valuable support to patients. "Leila is extremely compassionate. She not only helps patients as a hospice volunteer, but she also takes that extra step to bring us the support of Disney so that we can provide for patients in a truly significant way. She is one of our angels at the Foundation."

Aware of the grants from the Disney VoluntEARS Community Fund, Keating knew the Southern California Hospice Foundation was a perfect recipient of these funds, which are given to meaningful projects across the globe, with a primary focus on communities where Disney operates. Over the years, the small grants have totaled \$37,000 for the foundation. A check for \$5,000 was personally presented by Keating on behalf of the Disney VoluntEARS Community Fund to Wulfestieg. Together with her team of volunteers, nearly 300 patients receive assistance each year.

The funds will assist SCHF in continuing the shared mission of adding magic to the lives of the terminally ill. SCHF offers invaluable assistance through Children's Supportive Care services, Angel Assistance and Community Outreach Programs. Founded by Companion Hospice in 2002, the Foundation helps patients with needs that lie outside of the hospice benefit, such as helping with food, transportation, utility bills and granting final wishes.

### **About The Southern California Hospice Foundation**

The Southern California Hospice Foundation was established in 2002 to promote awareness of palliative care options for terminally ill children and adults, helping to enhance the quality of life for those at the end-of-life. Generous donations support programs designed to attend physically and emotionally to each patient's well-being. By supporting the Southern California Hospice Foundation, one becomes part of a compassionate effort that is uniquely focused on quality of life rather than quantity of days. For more information, please visit [www.socalhospicefoundation.org](http://www.socalhospicefoundation.org).